

Kentucky Literacy Link

A Publication of the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE)

Inside this issue:

Spotlight: Summer Boost	2
Content Area Literacy: The Next Generation Science Standards	3
The Benefits of an Arts Education	3
Letters About Literature 2014 Contest	3
KCAS and CTE: Choosing the Appropriate Texts	4
Three Quick Vocabulary Videos	4
Book Review: <i>The Instructional Leader's Guide to Strategic Conversations</i>	5
Upcoming Literacy Events Around Kentucky	5
Educational Strategies from PD 360	6
Technology Critique: www.diigo.com	6
Schoolwide Writing Unit from Fulton Independent	6
Teach Tech Wizardry with Graphic Novels	7
CCSSO Navigating Text Complexity	7
Facilitating a Smooth Transition to Kindergarten	7
Engaging Families	8
Kentucky Reading Association Annual Conference	8
Contact Information, KDE Updates and Additional Resources	9

Volume 4, Issue 1

August 2013

New Dawn, New Day, Feeling Good!

Most days when my 5 a.m. alarm wakes me up with Nina Simone's "Feeling Good" singing about birds and the sun and whatnot, I'm not exactly with her. It takes me about an hour to wake up and properly count my blessings before I'm feeling that good. Nonetheless, when I thought about the start of the 2013-14 school year, this was the first song to come to mind.

Personally, I started on a new journey this summer when I married my very best friend, my hero, my soulmate – the single-most amazing human being I have ever met. I can't even fathom the series of intricately fortunate events that led me to this moment, but my gratefulness knows no bounds. For me, everything feels new. I can't describe the thrill of changing my e-mail signature to Mikkaka Overstreet or of getting my new driver's license. Each day is full of little bursts of joy as I adjust to this new life, this new me.

It's not just my newlywed goggles that have everything looking so fresh, however. Professionally we are on the edge of a great precipice.



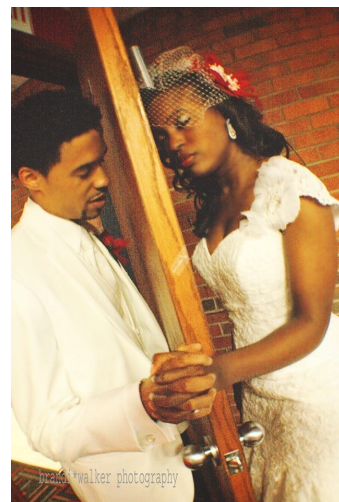
Everywhere there are shifts in education focused on improving teaching and learning in this country.

Teachers have the unique opportunity to start fresh each year. (I rambled on about this last year in my [August 2012 column](#), so I'll stop there.) This year, we are being introduced to a number of developments that will ensure new experiences as we strive to meet the rigorous standards before us.

We have new standards either freshly adopted or being prepared in several areas. The [Next Generation Science Standards](#) (NGSS) were adopted in June. The NGSS are internationally benchmarked, rigorous, research-based and aligned with expectations for college and careers. They provide for deeper understanding of content and application and hold so much promise for our students.

The National Coalition for Core Arts Standards (NCCAS) released its [pre-K-8 draft](#) standards for an online public review in July. The NCCAS standards writing teams are working on drafts of the high school (9-12) standards; an invitational review of the high school work will occur in September. A public review of the comprehensive draft pre-K-12 standards, including model cornerstone assessments, will begin in January 2014. The current project timeline includes a release date of March 2014, for the complete and finished standards. The Kentucky Board of Education would then consider adoption.

Additionally, Kentucky is in the process of developing new social studies standards based on the



Council of Chief State School Officers' [College, Career, and Civic Life \(C3\) Framework for Inquiry in Social Studies State Standards](#). Those standards are expected to go before the State Board in October.

I say all of that to emphasize the magnitude of this historic point in the field of education. We cannot continue to do things as we always have or we will not develop learners prepared for this brave new world in which we live. We are watching Nina's "new dawn," as her song says. Today is that new day she sings about. And when I think about the work we are doing for kids, I, too, am feeling good.

I hope that you will embrace the new this year and make it our best yet. Have a great start to the school year and, as always, thank you for all you do!

Mikkaka "MK" Overstreet is a KDE literacy consultant and the editor of this publication. Contact her at mik-kaka.overstreet@education.ky.gov.



Spotlight: Summer Boost Program

[Mikkaka Overstreet](#) is a KDE literacy consultant and the editor of this publication.

"What are you going to do for the rest of the summer?"

"READ!"

This was the battle cry of students of the Summer Boost program as they sat gathered on the floor of Barnes and Noble in Louisville on July 3. The University of Louisville (UofL) teamed up with J.B. Atkinson Academy for Excellence in Teaching and Learning to create the Summer Boost program, aimed at preventing the loss of information (commonly known as the "summer slide") that happens when kids take an extended period of time off from school. Beginning June 10, more than 100 elementary students from the Louisville area spent several hours a day participating in the program that, thanks to funding from the Sutherland Foundation, provided transportation, meals, learning materials and field trips. The program was staffed by UofL students and faculty and Atkinson teachers.

According to UofL literacy professor Christine Sherretz, "Programs like this can make a big difference. Not only are the students learning new material and reinforcing what they already know, but they are learning in a fun, engaging environment. We want to boost kids forward so they will be prepared for the next academic year. Best of all, we are connecting kids with books that are of interest to them. In the end, we want to create lifelong readers."

Now in its fourth year, the program is popular with undergraduate and graduate-level education students because it provides them with valuable classroom experience. Sherretz, UofL's liaison to Atkinson and primary organizer of the event, said graduate students in this year's program are all certified teachers working toward a master's degree in literacy. All of the 14 UofL students participating in the program are volunteers, which helps keep costs down, as well.

One of the neat incentives that supplemented

the program was that students could earn "book bucks" during their summer reading throughout the course of the program. The money was used on a field trip to Barnes & Noble on the last day of class, July 3.

When I joined the group at Barnes & Noble, the excitement was palpable. Students had earned anywhere from \$40 to more \$60 in "book bucks," plus Barnes & Noble generously added a 20 percent discount, no tax on their purchases, a free book, a bookmark and various other prizes. The students were well-prepared for the shopping experience, having discussed important concepts such as the prices of hardcover versus softcover books and having made wish lists of book series, authors and topics they wanted to find.

Students were partnered with adults to help them shop. Among the volunteers were Lue Peabody, Jefferson County Public Schools' Title I director, and UofL President James Ramsey. Ramsey spoke to news crews about the importance of summer reading and imperativeness of encouraging reading at an early age.



UofL President James Ramsey talks to students about their new books.

When I arrived, Atkinson Principal Stephanie Nutter greeted me with a warm hug and a smile before pairing me with two boys heading into middle school next year. Nutter's warmth was reflected in the attitudes of the rest of her staff, who were giving up their summers willingly to be a part of the program. Children laughed and joked with the teachers, who were all smiles and hugs.

Phillip and Jarvis, my buddies for the day, were about as enthusiastic as anyone could be about reading. Having earned \$64 and \$67, respectively, it was clear these boys were serious readers. As we toured the store, Jarvis exclaimed in amazement, "It's like a stadium of books! There are books about everything!"

As we searched for *Goosebumps* books Jarvis hadn't read and science books for Phillip, Jarvis told me how much he loves the program. "It helps us," he explained. "You're learning, but it's fun!" The boys dramatically fell to the ground



Students got to shop using "book bucks." At right, Jarvis looks for books at Barnes & Noble. Below, Jarvis and Phillip couldn't believe the *Naruto* and *Dragon Ball Z* graphic novels.



when they discovered graphic novels of popular Japanese cartoons *Naruto* and *Dragon Ball Z*. We debated who is the best *Dragon Ball Z* character (the boys disagreed with my assertion of Vegeta, preferring the heroic Goku) and Jarvis and I strove to convince Phillip, a careful shopper, to make selections. I was absolutely overwhelmed with their love of reading and their excitement over something I take for granted – access to books of personal interest.

The huge smiles of the students behind their stacks of books were validation enough for the necessity of the program. The Summer Boost program is an excellent model for summer reading programs. Oh, and in case you're wondering, Phillip and Jarvis left with seven or eight books apiece. They have plenty to read before school starts up again Aug. 20.

The relationship between Atkinson elementary school and the [University of Louisville](#) stems from the initiative [Signature Partnership](#), which works to enrich, improve and heighten the lives of West Louisville residents. For more information about Summer Boost, contact Christine Sherretz at (502) 852-2302. You also may enjoy the Wave 3 News [article](#) and the Summer Boost [video](#).

Content Area Literacy: The Next Generation Science Standards

Christine Duke is an elementary science consultant at KDE. Sean Elkins is an instructional specialist and former science consultant at KDE.

The Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) approved the [Next Generation Science Standards](#) (NGSS) at its meeting on June 6, 2013. A coalition of 26 states, including Kentucky, developed the standards; they identify science and engineering practices and content that all K-12 students should master in order to be fully prepared for college and careers.

The science standards are based on the [National Research Council's Framework for K-12 Science Education: Practices, Cross-cutting Concepts, and Core Ideas](#).

The NGSS have been in development for two years and meet the requirements for new standards mandated by Senate Bill 1 (2009). The science standards are internationally benchmarked, rigorous, research-based and aligned with expectations for college and careers. They provide for deeper understanding of content and application.

The NGSS explicitly connect to the English/Language Arts (ELA) Kentucky Core Academics Standards (KCAS). The structure (further described in the PowerPoint presentations linked below) includes a box at the bottom of each standard that lists suggestions for connections to the KCAS in ELA and mathematics. The list is by no means exhaustive, but rather includes a few possible links. Teachers likely will discover

many more connections as the NGSS are implemented.

In the aforementioned voiceover PowerPoint presentations, consultants Sean Elkins and Christine Duke provide an overview of the NGSS, as well as practical examples of implementation of the standards. These examples include explicit strategies for content literacy instruction as well as multiple examples of the connections between science and literacy.

For more information on the connections between the NGSS and the ELA KCAS, click [here](#) to access voiceover PowerPoint presentations that include both elementary and high school examples and an overview of the NGSS.

The Benefits of an Arts Education

Preparing Students for the Next America

Every young person in America deserves a complete and competitive education that includes the arts. America's global stature, culture of innovation and entrepreneurial spirit depend on the strength of a world-class education system. Perhaps now more than ever – as the country becomes increasingly diverse, the world more interconnected and the workplace more oriented around technology and creativity – arts education is key to such a system and to ensuring students' success in school, work and life.

For this reason, the Arts Education Partnership (AEP) created

[ArtsEdSearch.org](#) – the nation's first clearinghouse of research examining the mounting body of evidence on the benefits of an arts education. Drawing on the research in ArtsEdSearch, this [bulletin](#) offers a snapshot of how the arts support achievement in school, bolster skills demanded of a 21st-century workforce and enrich the lives of young people and communities.

The Arts Support KCAS

Drawing from the strongest models of state standards nationwide, the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics were released in mid-2010 and have been quickly adopted by almost all 50 states. Kentucky

adopted these standards as the Kentucky Core Academic Standards (KCAS). The standards seek to provide a "consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn, so teachers and parents know what they need to do to help them. The standards are designed to be robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that our young people need for success in college and career."

Given the central role that the standards are playing in education and school reform initiatives nationwide, it is a priority of the National Coalition of Core Arts Standards to ensure that the goals and objectives of

the Next Generation Arts Standards relate clearly and directly to the Common Core, and that these connections are actively considered as a part of the standards writing process.

With that goal in mind, College Board researchers undertook a [study](#) of the Common Core standards as they relate to arts-based learning. The study uncovered a great many connection between quality arts instruction and the English/language arts and math standards. Click [here](#) for more resources.



Letters About Literature 2014 Contest Rules and Guidelines

Letters About Literature (LAL) is a reading and writing contest for students in grades 4-12. Students are asked to read a book, poem or speech and write to that author (living or dead) about how the book affected them personally.

Letters are judged on state and national levels. Tens of thousands of students from across

the country enter Letters About Literature each year. Students in grades 4-12 are eligible to enter the Letters About Literature reading and writing contest.

LAL awards prizes on both the state and national levels. Each participating state center has its own panel of judges who select the top essayists in the state. State winners will receive a cash award

and advance to the national level judging. A panel of national judges for the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress will select one National Winner per competition level to receive a \$1,000 cash award.

The judges will also select one National Honor per competition level to receive a

\$200 cash award.

Grades 9-12 entries must be postmarked by Dec. 10, 2013. Grades 4-8 must be postmarked by Jan. 10, 2014.

Read previous national winning entries [here](#). Read our state winners in the [May 2013 Literacy Link](#). Click [here](#) for rules and guidelines.

KCAS and CTE: Choosing the Appropriate Texts

Teresa Rogers is a KDE literacy consultant. Rogers has taught nursing, health sciences, elementary reading and writing, and high school English. In the February 2013 issue, Rogers began a series on literacy in career and technical education (CTE). She continues here with part five of that series.

You've spent the first few days of August preparing for the new school year. There are newly waxed floors, freshly painted safety lines in your lab and a desk that is clutter free. You've reviewed your curriculum map, assembled materials and printed syllabi. In the midst of this hectic rush, it's easy to overlook a key question in preparing students for success beyond our classroom, "What will your students read in this course?"

An obvious answer to this question is the textbook and, although this resource is a wealth of information, the technical classroom provides the ideal setting to incorporate authentic texts that students will encounter in the workplace.

But where do you begin? Let's consider a few basics that can guide you through the process.

1. **Texts should support the current unit of study.** Supporting literacy in your classroom doesn't mean that you overlook the content; instead you use it as a vehicle for students to deepen their understanding of the skills and concepts you are teaching. Just as you collect resources and materials, begin to collect texts to supplement the current topic. Choose one or two of these to read during

the unit, and guide students to examine it closely for meaning, evaluate the information and compare it with what is presented in the textbook or hands-on activities.

2. **Text complexity should reflect what a professional in your field would read.** What articles would an expert in your field read in professional journals, newspapers or online? The Kentucky Core Academic Standards (KCAS) state that text complexity must be aligned with college- and career-readiness expectations for all students. They also recognize that you, as the educator, are best suited to select texts to meet the needs of your students. Students may struggle with these, but it is critical that we give them the opportunity to do so. Through scaffolded support from you, students will deepen their understanding of your content through a real-world lens. Further information on text complexity can be found in Appendix A of the Kentucky Core Academic Standards.
3. **Use a variety of texts.** To increase student engagement and provide experience comparable to the workplace, include a wide variety of texts such as business letters, reports, proposals, advertisements, editorials, product reviews or repair manuals. Texts that require students to evaluate the author's purpose or deliver information through tables, charts or diagrams build the critical literacy skills that students will need as they enter the workplace.



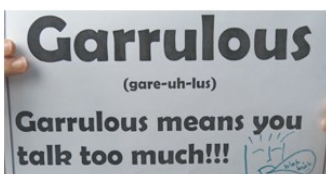
4. **Provide scaffolds to meet the needs of all your students.** Although you may have students who read below grade level, standard 10 states that all students will read and comprehend technical texts in their grade band independently and proficiently. To help them reach this goal, determine what supports they will need. Start with a short piece of text and use technology to make modifications adapting the length, visuals and/or vocabulary. "Chunk" the text into small, manageable sections and provide multiple opportunities for students to interact by choosing appropriate reading strategies. Provide time for students to read independently and with a partner. Read and think "aloud" to your students to model how good readers make sense of complex text. All students will benefit from consistent, ongoing support through the reading process.

As you start the new school year, or any new unit of study, consider how you can support students as they build the literacy skills necessary to succeed in your field. It's a daunting, but worthy, task that will impact the lives of countless students. So the key question is, "What will your students read this year?"

Three Quick Vocabulary Videos from Teaching Channel

Teaching Channel is a video showcase – on the Internet and TV – of inspiring and effective teaching practices in America's schools. It

has a rapidly growing community of registered members who trade ideas and share inspiration from each other.



As you prepare to head back to school, here are three quick strategy videos, all centered around teaching vocabulary.

The first two highlight different

approaches for teaching difficult vocabulary in high school. See how Ms. Niebur [pre-teaches vocabulary words](#) before tackling a digital-literacy topic.

Next, watch how Ms. Banks [builds her students' vocabulary](#) when reading science texts. This strategy is easy to apply to any grade level.



Finally, watch [College Talk](#) featuring Ms. Kim's approach to teaching young students words that many may think could wait until later.

For more information, to become a member or to access more great videos, visit teachingchannel.org.

Book Review: *The Instructional Leader's Guide to Strategic Conversations*

[Cindy Parker](#) is the literacy coordinator for KDE.

The Instructional Leader's Guide to Strategic Conversations with Teachers: How to provide customized feedback to teachers that actually helps them get better at teaching by Robyn R. Jackson, Phd. Mindsteps, Inc. 2008.

As a classroom teacher I received little, if any, feedback on my practice. I continuously self-assessed and adjusted my instruction – both in the moment and ongoing – based on that reflection, but having opportunities to engage in meaningful conversations that helped improve my practice were often incidental and certainly infrequent. Two aspects of the Teacher Professional Growth and Effectiveness System (TPGES), which will be piloted statewide this year, that excite me as an educator are the opportunities for peer observations and feedback, and the role of self-reflection throughout the system that allows me to target my professional learning to meet the goals I have established for myself.

The Instructional Leader's Guide to Strategic Conversations with Teachers is a practical, useful guide for coaches, teacher leaders in hybrid roles or anyone who wants to be more reflective to improve instructional practices. Engaging in professional conversations about instruction is at the heart of the work. "Strategic conversations are built upon a foundation of understandings, beliefs, and commitments" (p. 11). The first foundation of strategic conversations is an understanding of what makes good instruction. Along with that, you need to believe that

"teachers can, with effective instructional leadership and support, improve their practice" (11).

The guide covers four types of strategic conversations:

1. reflecting
2. facilitating
3. coaching
4. directing

Jackson explains the coach/teacher will need to assess the teachers with which they will be collaborating in two areas along a continuum – **will** and **skill**. The book contains guiding questions to help categorize each type; these are your four types of teachers. The rest of the book discusses how to engage each group accordingly.

Will	High Will	High Will
	Low Skill	High Skill
	Low Will	Low Skill
	Low Skill	High Skill
Skill		

Reflecting conversations involve asking reflective questions, using reflective listening (asking follow-up questions and paraphrasing what you're hearing) and summarizing. **Facilitating** involves the teacher identifying the instructional challenge, and the coach/teacher helping facilitate the process to resolve it. The teacher sets the goal, and the coach/teacher helps achieve it. **Coaching** involves providing growth-oriented feedback that will lead to improvements in instructional practice.

When the first three types of strategic conversations don't work, **directing** is needed. The purpose of directing is "to help teachers make an immediate change" (57). Provide conditions for success and accountability for action.

When working with a **low will/high skill** teacher, for example, the coach/teacher may want to use a facilitative conversation to help them identify, develop or refine a specific teaching skill. "Because these teachers are low will, they may not easily recognize or own their instructional challenges" (44). Coaching conversation worksheets are included throughout to assist in planning and reflecting.

One of the reasons I made the decision to leave the classroom in 2007 was to seek opportunities for leadership outside of a traditional leadership track. I loved facilitating learning for students, but I also wanted to impact my colleagues and our shared responsibility for student learning. I wasn't interested in being a principal or administrator. There weren't any roles for me to lead in other ways from the classroom nor were there opportunities to engage in regular conversations with my peers about our practices. I hope that through the TPGES things will change for current and future teachers so that they have opportunities to both lead and engage in strategic conversations as instructional leaders. I see that happening. *The Instructional Leader's Guide to Strategic Conversations with Teachers* is a resource that can help in the development of those skills.

Upcoming Literacy Events Around Kentucky

Free Book Available Statewide

The Kentucky Press Association and Newspapers in Education are offering everyone in Kentucky a free book this fall. This year's theme is Kentucky agriculture. The story, *Outstanding in His Field* by Kentucky author Leigh Anne Florence and illustrator Chris Ware, will begin with chapter one in newspapers across the state the week of Sept. 8. Teachers should contact their local newspaper to request free scrapbooks. Use scrapbooks to collect each weekly chapter and at the end of the 10

weeks have your own unique book. Florence is available to visit schools and libraries and autograph scrapbooks.

This internationally award-winning project also includes [online activities](#) for each chapter and podcasts of the story character, Woody, reading each chapter. The project runs Sept. 8-Nov. 30, 2013.

[Universal Design for Learning \(UDL\) and the Arts Across the Curriculum](#)
Facilitators will work with par-

ticipants on incorporating the UDL into their classroom. The UDL "provides a blueprint for creating instructional goals, methods, materials, and assessments that work for everyone--not a single, one-size-fits-all solution, but rather flexible approaches that can be customized and adjusted for individual needs."

The event is Saturday, Aug. 10, 2013 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. EST at the [Kentucky Artisan Center](#) in Berea. To register, click [here](#). For further information, contact

[Mary Claire O'Neal](#), VSA Kentucky program director at (859) 272-2515.

LWP Mini-Conference with Science Literacy Strand

On Saturday, Aug. 24, from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., join the Louisville Writing Project at the University of Louisville for its annual mini-conference. The conference includes a [special strand](#) designed to support you in engaging students in meeting the new standards for research through the [SciJourn](#) process. Click [here](#) for more information.

Educational Strategies from PD 360



PD 360 contains the largest online library of training videos for educators in the world. When you access PD 360, you will have essential tools that provide more value than any other on-demand professional-development resource. The 2,000-plus videos and online professional learning community of nearly 1 million verified educators make PD 360 the world's largest on-demand professional development resource for educators. All Kentucky educators have access to PD 360 and other resources from the School

Improvement Network from the CIITS homepage.

Common Core in the Classroom: Research and Persuasion

Stephanie Buquoi, a 1st-grade English teacher at Shiloh Point Elementary School in Cumming, Ga., facilitates her students' development of research and persuasive writing skills so they can appeal to the manager of Petco to donate a pet to their classroom.

Buquoi's lesson is aligned with multiple 1st-grade Common Core ELA standards (W.1.6-8; RI.1.5; SL.1.1, 3 and 5). Her lesson includes the following:

- Defining a clear goal – persuading the manager of Petco to donate a pet to their classroom.
- Discussing the elements of persuasion – as a class and in small groups, sharing and learning what elements of

persuasion are and how they are used.

- Researching the kind of pet for the classroom – students (in groups) look up the cost of caring for various pets they would like to have in the classroom.

Watch the video [here](#). Learn more about Common Core-focused classroom lessons by viewing video segments in the Common Core in the Classroom program on Common Core 360.

Technology Critique: www.diigo.com

This month's critique is by [Lindsey Murt](#). Murt is a mathematics teacher at North Oldham High School in Oldham County.

What is it?

[Diigo](#) is a site that can be used for storing and annotating information, and networking with other professionals. It allows you to bookmark articles into your Diigo library. You can then highlight and make sticky notes on the article. If you find something online and don't have the time to read it you can mark as "read later" and it will appear on your site the next time you log in.

You also can join groups that are pertinent to the content you teach or things you might be

interested in. Within those groups, resources can be shared between professionals. I am a member of Cool Tools and Ed Tech, Web 2.0 Tools for Teachers, Discovery Educator Network, and I Love Teaching Math.

Why? (purpose)

While I have not actually used it with students, I know a middle school language arts teacher who uses the highlighting and sticky note features when teaching her students how to annotate. She can pull it up on her SMART board and they can complete the task as a class.

In a similar manner, this site can be used when students are doing research so that all of their in-

formation and notes can be found in one place. This site is very much an aid in literacy as it can show students ways to read, write, annotate and interpret text.

Pros

The site can be used at home, at school or even on a mobile device. As long as you use the same account in each place, your information will be automatically updated and viewable on any device.

Another nice feature is the ability to make something available offline. That way if you find an article you would like to read, it can actually be downloaded to your technology device and you

can read it later even if you don't have internet access.

Cons

The only real pitfall I have found so far is when reading a multi-page article on the internet, if you are annotating it makes each page a separate entity. This isn't such a big deal unless you want to share it with someone else. At that point you have to send each of the pages that you have annotated instead of just the link to the article if you want people to see all you have commented.

Please send critiques of technology that supports your professional growth or classroom instruction to [MK Overstreet](#).



Schoolwide Writing Unit from Fulton Independent school district

[Jennifer Caldwell](#) is an elementary reading specialist and the Read to Achieve teacher at Carr Elementary in the Fulton Independent school district.

As part of my professional growth plan this year, I chose to lead teachers in effective research-based literacy and writing strategies. At our school, we have been searching for ways to help teachers and students focus on developing

quality writing to meet the Kentucky Core Academic Standards. To this end, I created a schoolwide writing unit on the U.S. Postal Service.

Teachers are making a schoolwide effort to implement the writing standards weekly through our "Writer of the Week Program."

Throughout March, students used the writing process, the

six writing traits and effective writing strategies to publish a piece.

This [unit](#) focused on the history and significance of postage stamps. It includes resources to help guide a discussion of stamp purpose, history and identification. The unit builds a foundation into the stamp-design curriculum by giving a historical overview of how and why stamps are an important

part of postal operations, how designs are an integral part of stamps and how stamps are used today.



Teach Tech Wizardry with Graphic Novels

The mission of the International Reading Association (IRA) is to promote reading by continuously advancing the quality of literacy instruction and research worldwide. In its July monthly member newsletter, the IRA shared this great classroom idea. Learn more about IRA, including how to become a member, at www.reading.org.

Students bring a wealth of technology knowledge to the classroom, but that doesn't mean they don't still have plenty to learn. By creating lessons that focus on reading and creating graphic novels, you can explore new technology and vital literacy skills simultaneously.

Begin by introducing a variety of comics and graphic novels to your class. Discuss how the words and images work in tan-

dem. Make the move to incorporating technology by engaging your students in common practices like reading online book reviews and journals, and researching topics on the Internet.

Now that you've dipped your toe in, it's time to make the leap to new technology. Collaborate with your school's tech teachers to decide what comic creation software (such as Read-WriteThink's Comic Creator) is best for your class. Arrange for minilessons covering the basics of the software, and prepare your students to write their own graphic novels by inserting captions into wordless comics. Discuss the importance of word choice and tone as they correlate with the images.

As your students gain proficien-

cy in using the software and writing comics, allow them to create their own original works. Nothing hooks an aspiring writer and tech wiz like publishing a final product.

Relevant Kentucky Core Academic Standards (not a comprehensive list):

- Reading Anchor Standard 4: Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.
- Reading Anchor Standard 7: Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
- Writing Anchor Standard 3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.
- Writing Anchor Standard 6: Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.
- Speaking and Listening Anchor Standard 2: Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

CCSSO Navigating Text Complexity

Understanding text complexity is essential to implementing the Common Core State Standards in ELA and Literacy.

To assist teachers with this implementation, the new [Navigating Text Complexity](http://www.ccss.org/Navigation) website

was assembled by educators from Connecticut, Hawaii, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Michigan, Missouri, North Carolina, West Virginia and Wyoming – members of the Council of Chief State School Officers' (CCSSO) ELA

State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards. These tools include information regarding what text complexity is and how it's measured, the three legs of text complexity, examples and models of analyzed texts, guid-



ance on how to analyze texts on your own, tips on bridging to instruction, and other additional resources.

Facilitating a Smooth Transition to Kindergarten

The following is an excerpt from Does the Transition to Kindergarten Impact Students' Third Grade Reading Performance? If So, How Do We Help Facilitate a Smooth Transition? by Cynthia Bertlesen and Susan Peet. Bertlesen and Peet describe ways for children to make a smooth transition to kindergarten – by supporting interpersonal relationships, ensuring continuity from preschool to kindergarten, drawing on family support, and more. The article also includes a short bibliography of children's books and a list of technology resources to enhance early literacy development. Read the article [here](#).

Focusing on Family Strengths

Developing meaningful relationships that include frequent and positive interactions

between families and early childhood educators strengthens the home-school partnership. Promoting connections that honor, value and support the family structure, language, culture and traditions bolsters children's confidence and learning potential. Early childhood professionals could:

- incorporate literature that is inclusive of multicultural and multilingual opportunities for children and families to see themselves portrayed in literature and stories
- use rich traditions that are portrayed in writing, music and other forms of expression
- connect families to community resources such as libraries and other



literacy-rich settings

encourage families and children to participate in collaborative reading and writing activities at home, especially during the summer months before entering kindergarten

Engaging Families: Connecting Families and Teachers in Today's World

Bonnie Lash Freeman is an education specialist – training/special projects for the National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL). In this capacity, she manages various projects and grants focused in the areas of family literacy program development, family engagement, and elementary and early childhood language and literacy development. In addition, she was the primary staff member to facilitate the development of NCFL's Certified Trainers – a network of family literacy professionals across the nation. Her expertise in program development includes NCFL's Toyota Family Learning Project, the Family Literacy Corps (a national AmeriCorps project), the South Carolina Head Start Family Independence Project, the Head Start Family Literacy Project, the ParentChild Interaction Project (partnership with the Louisville Science Center and funded by the National Science Foundation), the Prichard Committee Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership, the Kentucky Reading Project, and the Chase Building Readers Project. From 2004-08, she served on the Kentucky Board of Education.

When I was teaching in elementary school, the end of the summer was exciting. Time



spent with my family revived me, mentally and physically, and I felt ready to start the school year. Boy, I wish I knew then what I know now about reaching out to my students and their families! I wish I'd had the tools that exist now. My job of communicating with family members would have been so much easier. I wrote letters and postcards; today's teachers have apps and electronic systems that are designed to connect them with families. Building relationships and establishing communication systems with families are two of the first steps toward developing partnerships focused on student achievement.

I want to share a few examples of free online and mobile applications to communicate and collaborate with parents and family members. Websites, e-mails and texting still work. Many of today's families have access to smartphones and other devices that will allow for more expanded connections than in the past. Even low-income and rural families use text-capable mobile phones.

Consider the following applications as you plan your family communication strategies for this year. Once you decide which applications you want to use, remember to introduce them to parents at your first encounter – whether home visits, back-to-school nights, or open house events.

- The Teacher App & Grade Book – This free tool allows parents to check grades, attendance and events.
- Remind 101 – This text-message system allows teachers to remind parents



about events quickly.

- Google Apps for Education – You may be most familiar with this set of tools designed to keep parents apprised of their children's progress in the classroom.
- WDWDT? (What Did We Do Today?) This app lets you create surveys for parents, develop volunteer forms, schedule meetings and send e-mails. For more information, click [here](#).

For more explanation and other mobile applications for collaboration and communication, see the article "[7 Free Apps for Keeping Parents and Teachers Connected](#)" by Bridget McCrea.

Remember to check your district and school rules concerning contacting families using any electronic tools. Otherwise, here's to engaging families and building partnerships for student achievement through technology!

Kentucky Reading Association Annual Conference

The 2013 Kentucky Reading Association Conference is gearing up to bring another outstanding event, themed "Literacy without Borders" to Lexington, Oct. 17-19, 2013.

You do not want to miss the opportunity to celebrate KRA's 50th year and hear from Don Leu, Brenda Overturf, Maureen McLaughlin, Betsy Baker, Suzy Kline, and other national, state, and local literacy experts at this year's conference.

(Preview this year's speakers

[here](#).)

The sessions are designed to focus our attention on the Kentucky Core Academic Standards, technology in education, exceptional children, and research-based instruction for pre-K through post-secondary literacy learners.

In addition, we will celebrate numerous special occasions at the 2013 conference, including the Kentucky Bluegrass Awards Luncheon with special guest author George Ella Lyon, the Author's Luncheon and a legisla-

tive forum, to name just a few. You can find more information and the registration link at www.kyreading.org.

Additional information:

- The Hyatt Regency Lexington is located at 401 West High St., Lexington, KY 40507. Phone : (859) 253-1234.
- Your registration includes all keynote sessions, conference sessions, exhibit hall admittance, all conference materials, optional pre-conference sessions



(additional fee and pre-registration required), and optional meal functions (additional fees and pre-registration required).

Help

Your contributions of ideas and lessons that work are welcome. E-mail mikka-ka.overstreet@education.ky.gov to submit. Your submissions may be included in the Literacy Link to help connect teachers across the state by sharing ideas, insights and best practices.

Access this and past Literacy Links on KDE's website:
[Click Here](#)



If you have questions or concerns, we want to help. Contact:

- Cindy Parker – Literacy Coordinator – cindy.parker@education.ky.gov
- Kelly Clark – Literacy Consultant – kelly.clark@education.ky.gov
- Jackie Rogers – Literacy Consultant – jackie.rogers@education.ky.gov
- Teresa Rogers – Literacy Consultant – teresa.rogers@education.ky.gov
- Pamela Wininger – Literacy Consultant – pamela.wininger@education.ky.gov
- MK Overstreet – Literacy Consultant – mikkaka.overstreet@education.ky.gov



Feedback from the Field

Your feedback helps us to tailor the Link to best meet the needs of teachers. Tell us how you're using it. Tell us how you'd like to use it. Tell us what you want to see more or less of. We want to hear from you!
[E-mail MK Overstreet.](mailto:E-mail MK Overstreet)

"Thank you, as always, for the outstanding publication. Thank you, I think, for making me cry. Thank you for reminding me that most people are simply doing the best that they can do with what they have been given."

-Synthia S.

"Thanks for sharing your inspirational message. It gives me hope in dealing with my struggling readers and their families! All my students are at risk and it sometimes is hard to stay positive where their parents are concerned!"

-Melinda S.

"Very nice column for sending people off for the summer! Eyes wet, heart inspired. Great job!"

-Melinda C.

"I loved your opening piece. It was a great professional and personal

reminder to believe the best of others ... after all, it's what we desperately hope people believe about us!"

-Amanda W.

"Your article brought tears to my eyes and gave me hope for the future. One of my goals for the next school year is to try to get to know all of my students' parents. Thank you, again."

-Rhonda O.



KDE Updates

More than 100 districts raise dropout age to 18

More than 100 school districts have adopted the new "Graduate Kentucky" standard keeping students in school through age 18 or until they earn a high school diploma.

Senate Bill 97 (SB 97), known as the "Graduate Kentucky" bill, passed this year and phases in an increase in the compulsory school attendance age from 16 to 18,

amending the school attendance law created in 1934.

Leaders launched "Blitz to 96" – an effort to get 96 school districts (55 percent of all districts) to approve a policy raising the compulsory school age, because once that number approved the change, the remaining school districts would be obligated to adopt and implement the policy within four years. It took only two weeks to reach

the 55 percent threshold. The first 96 districts to approve the change earned \$10,000 grants from KDE to plan for full implementation in the 2015-16 school year.

More information about Graduate Kentucky, a list of districts that have approved the policy and resources available to school districts is available [here](#).

Additional Reading and Other Resources

- *Learning Forward* has produced a brief but comprehensive report about the roles of schools, districts, and state education agencies in creating and sustaining coherent and comprehensive professional learning. The report, which is available [here](#), highlights Kentucky's collaboration with key stakeholders, shares eight important lessons that we have learned and concludes that the transformative changes we are making are complex but full of promise and opportunity.
- [Just Right Text](#) – Learn how Kathy Mansfield, KDE's library media and textbooks consultant and former library media specialist at Heritage Elementary School (Shelby County), targeted reading at the elementary level using Lexile resources and the Kentucky Virtual Library.
- Looking for good books? Check out the [2013 Colorado Book Award Winners](#).

